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JAPAN ALLIES TO USE SD CARD FOR WIRELESS MUSIC NETWORK

TOKYO -- The Secure Digital Card (SD card) consortium got a lift last week when Japan's dominant wireless carrier NTT Mobile Communications (Docomo) and Matsushita Communications Industrial Co. Ltd. announced plans to set up a wireless music distribution network that will let users download songs onto SD-compatible portable phones and audio recorders.

The companies will form a venture called Air Media Inc., which will be 51 percent owned by NTT Docomo and 49 percent by Matsushita. Air Media will start testing its Mobile Media Distribution Service in April and expects to launch commercial services by fall. Music will be distributed over Docomo's 64-kbit/second Personal Handyphone Service.

The company is also planning to make the service available over wideband code division multiple access. which is expected to be launched in Japan by the spring of 2001.

Users will be able to download and sample songs, concert information and other programming from a